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DCI

Casey Reported Willing to Face Polygraph Test

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CIA Director William J. Casey has said he is willing to take a polygraph test to help resolve his dispute with White House chief of staff James A. Baker III about whether Casey received then-President Carter's debate briefing material during the 1980 presidential campaign, according to informed sources.

Since becoming CIA director, Casey twice has taken polygraph tests on matters relating to national security, the sources said.

Casey reportedly has asserted that it would be "demeaning" to take a polygraph test as part of the FBI investigation of how the Carter papers were obtained by officials of Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign. But, according to the sources, Casey has concluded that, like Baker, he is willing to undergo such examination.

Late last summer, when the possibility of lie detector tests first arose, Casey declined to discuss the matter while Baker let it be known that he was willing to take the test.

The dispute between the two top-level officials of the Reagan administration has continued to hamstring

the congressional and FBI investigations into the Carter briefing papers incident.

Baker acknowledges that he had the debate documents, and says he got them from Casey, who was Reagan's 1980 campaign manager. Casey vehemently denies that, saying he never had the Carter documents and did not even know that the Carter papers had been obtained by Reagan campaign officials.

"My conscience is clear," Casey is said to have remarked recently when he indicated he, too, is now willing to submit to polygraph testing.

After almost five months, FBI and congressional investigators have been unable to determine how the Reagan campaign obtained Carter's private debate papers.

But officials involved in the investigation said that resolving the Baker-Casey contradiction has become crucial to the success of their probe. "Presumably one of them is lying," one official said earlier this month, "and to go the next step we need a resolution."

Such officials have wanted to use lie detector tests for some time and they expected that approval would be routine. But FBI Director William H. Webster has withheld approval. A spokesman, Roger Young, said last week that Webster has indicated that the decision on whether to use lie detector tests is expected to be left with the Justice Department.

A senior FBI official said earlier this month that the question of whether to approve lie detector tests is a policy decision, first because of the sensitive positions of Casey and Baker, and second because it is not clear there was any crime involved in the transfer of nonclassified documents or papers from the Carter White House to the Reagan campaign. "If there is no crime, it's going to be hard for [the FBI] to say they want to go around taking lie detector tests," the FBI official said.

Investigators have been intrigued by a meeting between Baker and Casey in the White House on Sunday, June 26. This was four days after the two had publicly aired their differing recollections about the briefing material in separate letters to the House

subcommittee headed by Rep. Donald J. Albosta (D-Mich.), who is conducting a separate investigation.

According to a Casey associate, when Casey went into the room, Baker had copies of the briefing material laid out on a table. He said Baker urged the CIA director to review the papers and try hard to see if he could recall receiving them during the 1980 campaign. "Casey felt he was being set up," the Casey associate said.

Another source, who is familiar with Baker and Casey's accounts of the meeting, said Baker went further, urging Casey to "say you saw it. It won't get you in trouble."

Casey reportedly has said he believed Baker was trying to induce him to acknowledge that he had seen the material previously, assuring him there would be no culpability if he had seen it before. Casey also reportedly said both men realized that the matter could develop into a major political embarrassment for the president and that it would be helpful if someone would "take the rap" for receiving the briefing book.

Baker reportedly has said the meeting was simply to determine if the actual material might serve to jog Casey's recollection. Casey left the meeting, but then called Baker asking to borrow the material overnight, and was given a copy of the briefing papers.

Several days before that White House meeting, when Baker and Casey first discussed their differing recollections, according to sources, Casey was very tentative in his denial, indicating that it was possible he had received the Carter documents before.

After his June 26 meeting with Baker, Casey told a confidant who works in the White House that he was thinking about changing his original public statement that he had never received the Carter debate documents, according to one reliable account.

This Casey confidant said Casey told him he recalled having received something from a Democratic political consultant named Paul Corbin, but he could not recall what it was. Corbin had worked for the 1980 Reagan campaign and received \$2,860 in expense money authorized by Casey.

Baker had mentioned the possible Corbin connection to Casey in the June 26 meeting, saying he had heard that Corbin once

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